

The Most Significant Event in My Educational Development

DIANA STAFFIN

Rhetoric 101, Theme A

I WAS IN MY PRIME IN KINDERGARTEN. I WAS A GENIUS at Paper-Cutting 101, a "little Rembrandt" at Fingerpainting 102 and the pride of my teacher in Group Games for Youngsters (ages four to six) 200. My great downfall was "peg time."

At ten-thirty on Wednesday mornings my teacher would announce musically, "It's peg time!" and all my little classmates would run eagerly to the gigantic pegboard and start jamming vari-colored and multi-shaped pegs into corresponding holes in the board. At this time each week, I was dumbfounded. Why wouldn't the square peg fit into the round hole?

Patiently, my teacher would explain the difference in the shapes of the pegs. Gently, she would guide my hand to the square hole. I would smile.

"Now, do it alone, dear," she would coo. A moment of thought, and then—plunk! Square peg, round hole. Sometimes the peg would get stuck, and I would die of embarrassment while the teacher pried it out of the board.

A council of teachers decided I was unable to learn the simple procedure of peg-placing because something was disturbing me. They could not promote an emotionally upset child to the difficult tasks and responsibilities of first grade.

During my second time around in kindergarten, I searched my mind for the answer to my problem. Was I rebelling against something? Was I insecure? Was I stupid?

One day, during paper-cutting, the solution came to me. (After two years, paper-cutting took very little concentration.) I had been unrealistic! "I must learn to call a spade a spade!" I said aloud.

I rushed to the peg-board (even though it was only Tuesday) and filled all the square holes with square pegs and the round holes with round pegs. I stepped back to admire my work.

"You have learned an important lesson, my dear." The teacher's over-sweet voice came from behind me. "You have learned to understand the purpose for things in this world. You now know that all things—including you—are created for certain purposes and cannot be forced beyond those purposes or beyond their capabilities."

"Yes," I said simply, and walked solemnly to the first grade room and a new life.

Heat

HARVEY PASTKO

Rhetoric 101, Theme 8

IT BEGAN QUIETLY WITHOUT AROUSING THE SLIGHTEST suspicion. It developed with amazing speed and silence. It was unannounced; it did not warn of its coming. Instead, moving in insidious silence, it fed itself. It gathered all that was near and, as if intelligent, groped for what was beyond.

Those who slept above had no idea of its existence. They, in their dirty, crowded rooms, wished only to sleep. In each stuffy, humid apartment they set themselves to the chore of wresting slumber from the oppressive night. They lay in silence. The heat and humidity, the sweat and filth made the silence an agony. In restless misery some lay awake, while others balanced delicately between consciousness and sleep.

All day their tenement stood gaunt in the ravaging sun. No portion of the building escaped the bleaching light. Heat poured down upon every sill and window, on every chimney and porch. It broiled the gravel of the roof and baked each red-bricked surface. Now, in the darkness, each stone, each brick returned the stifling heat.

Far below, beneath the agonizing night, there grew another heat. In the cool and shaded basement, within a hidden corner, it nurtured itself. Behind a dirty staircase amidst the residue of many years it quietly moved. Between the wooden shed, under the piles of rubble it lurked. It licked at the bundles of discarded paper, the dusty cans and jars of paint. It moved faster now as if emboldened by its own strength. It pushed to all corners of the wretched basement. It gorged itself on rotted wood, bundled clothes and forgotten books. It moved wildly, frantically, as if bewildered by its own might. It lurched and quivered, pushing blindly to the walls and ceiling. It writhed in the ecstasy of being alive.

Across the slumbering city moved an awareness. Through the fitful night moved the message of its existence. Between the darkened tenements, beyond the silent park and through the empty streets, that which was alive was known.

Blossoming into maturity, it moved upward. It moved quickly, as a cat, through the many openings of the basement. It curled its dancing fingers around each stair and railing. It moved in a crackling vortex through the decaying stairwells. It washed against the crumbling plaster, pushed against each fastened door. It tore savagely at each wooden fixture, ripped angrily at each protruding ledge. It crawled along the dirty carpet and slithered under fastened doors. It was now a monster.

The city awoke. The restless, smothering night had exploded. In an instant the palpable pressure of the darkness was gone. Screams ripped away the silence; echoing footsteps washed away the frustrations of insomnia. In but a few moments there was movement, excitement, then chaos.

But it was too late.

The Letdown

WILLIAM H. BUSSEY

Rhetoric 101, Theme 1

THE AIRPORT LAY IN THE VALLEY. THE WESTERING sun had dropped below the hills leaving the valley dark while a few high scattered clouds glowed pink in the late evening sunset. To the people in the valley, it was dusk. A small airplane climbed slowly upward in the sky. To the people in the aircraft, it was still daylight with the setting sun still visible beyond the hills. Lights began blinking on in the valley below. The pilot put on his sun glasses.

The plane reached altitude and started a large circle which brought it over the airport. Suddenly it seemed to falter, the wings and fuselage reflecting the orange sun, hidden to the people in the valley. A tiny black speck appeared just below the aircraft, seemed to hang suspended for a moment, and then dropped towards the earth gaining speed as it fell. A second speck appeared. The sound of the aircraft's engine, a remote buzz, came to the darkening valley below. The two small specks became tiny X's twisting and turning slowly as they plummeted toward the dark earth below. The sun, hidden to the valley, caused the falling X's to take on an orange tint. Downward they tumbled, gradually taking the shape of men, arms outstretched, legs spread.

Downward they spiraled: downward and downward they fell. As they got closer to the ground, the amazing speed at which they were falling became apparent. Suddenly, when it seemed that they must surely hit the ground, a small orange blossom appeared above each man. The small flowers pulled away from the men dragging long streamers of silk after them. The streamers extended, then opened suddenly, revealing themselves as giant red and white umbrellas. The small figures were jerked upright, seemed to hang suspended for a moment, and then sank slowly into the dark bowl of the valley. Several moments after the chutes opened, the cool summer breeze carried the sound of two sheets being snapped in the wind to the valley below. The two figures, now hanging helplessly from their suspension lines, were hard to see in the dusk as they settled to the ground. The two jumpers, now limited and confined in their actions by the ties of the earth, were silent as they rolled the lifeless folds of silk into bags and began the long, dark walk home.

The Burden of Truth

MARK WESTERLAND

Rhetoric 101, Theme 10

WHAT IS TRUTH? WHAT EFFECT HAS TRUTH ON society? What bearing has the truth of the past on the pattern of the future? These are the questions posed and answered by *All the King's Men*.

The book purports to be the story of the late Willie Stark, political boss and governor of a southern state, a character greatly resembling Huey Long of Louisiana. In a much greater sense, however, the book is a study of truth and its effects and uses in a modern society.

The truth may be separated into two meanings: truth and Truth. In its first meaning, truth refers to the facts—what happened when, where and how. The second meaning, Truth, concerns the terms *what, where, when* and *how*, but it also concerns a fifth term, perhaps the most important of the five—*why*.

The truth is vile, false and misleading. It is also easily believable and as such is a valuable weapon of a political machine. The Truth, however, is pure, exact and definite. It is also extremely difficult to credit and even more difficult to discover. The Truth can apply to all life. And like the laws of physics it is always applicable and valid. The Truth, however, tends to hurt those that discover it unless they are prepared to accept it completely.

All the King's Men reveals both truth and Truth. The truths given are events and conflicts in the lives of the characters. Governor Willie Stark's son is a playboy football hero. Stark himself is unable to live with his wife, but won't divorce her for political reasons. The honest Judge Irwin took a bribe twenty-five years ago when he was Attorney General. The woman which the narrator, Jack Burden, loves is Stark's mistress.

The Truths, however, can only be discovered by a thorough analysis of the plot and key paragraphs. One Great Truth eagerly accepted by Burden at the time is the "Truth of the Great Twitch." Upon hearing of the affair between Willie Stark and the woman he loves, Burden flees to California. After the hate and sickness in his heart have diminished, Burden decides to return, and at a small filling station in New Mexico he picks up an elderly hitchhiker. The face of the old man was seized by spasms which, Burden explains, were 'simply an independent phenomenon, unrelated to the face or to what was behind the face or to anything in the whole tissue of phenomena which is the world we are lost in.' The spasm becomes, to Burden, the "Great Twitch." The Great Twitch represents a man, and the face, unmoved by the twitch, is the man's environment, the world. The twitch was all. "But," asks Burden, "if the twitch was all,

what was it that could know that the twitch was all? . . . That is the mystery. That is what you have . . . to find out. That the twitch can know that the twitch is all. Then, . . . you feel clean and free. You are at one with the Great Twitch."

Jack Burden was a historian, a lover of truth. But through the first thirty-five years of his life he could not understand the bearing of the past on the future. During this time he formulated laws like the "Great Twitch" from the injuries inflicted upon him by the truth. However, with the disasters that struck him after this time, he came to realize perhaps the only Truth that applies to all men.

" . . . If you could not accept the past and its burden there was no future, for without one there cannot be the other, and . . . if you could accept the past you might hope for the future, for only out of the past can you make the future."

On Limits to Liberty

REBECCA HUSS

Rhetoric 102, Theme 9

JOHN STUART MILL'S ESSAY "ON LIBERTY" MIGHT WELL be called a treatise on human rights, for it attempts to set forth the principles which govern man's relations with man. These principles, being statements of the bounds between majority dominion and individual sovereignty, might be used today to solve some of the problems in human relations such as segregation or the issue of the conscientious objector. They might, that is, except for the fact that they can be applied with equal efficiency to either side of the question. Such application is the purpose of the following essays.

ON LIMITS TO LIBERTY (I)

Through the years which span the gap between the earliest beginnings of civilization and the present day, man's concept of the nature of liberty has undergone great changes. Civilized man first concerned himself with the securing of political liberty, the recognition of many so-called rights, and the protection of these rights from usurpation by a tyrannical political ruler or group of rulers. But as ideas of government gradually changed and progressed to the point that a group of people became its own political authority, ideas of liberty must, of necessity, have changed accordingly. They might have become more simple, with the elimination of the old problem of the government's tyranny over the individual. Instead, the struggle for liberty became, in reality, a question of both political *and* social rights. Of these two, the

struggle for freedom from the oppression of society is, in America today, by far the more serious problem.

Since it is evident that, without some restraint upon the individuals of which a civilization is composed, civilization could not long exist, there can be no valid objection to the exercising of this power of restraint by the body in which it has been vested. Whether this restraining force is the law as legislated by the government or whether it is merely the opinion of the mass of society makes a difference only in the area of conduct acted upon. Now a new question arises: Over what areas of conduct shall the mass as represented both by law and by public opinion have jurisdiction? Just what limits can be set to this majority power? Since it is obvious that the law cannot and society will not rule to limit its own authority, this problem must be resolved arbitrarily. This is the purpose toward which John Stuart Mill is working in his essay "On Liberty." The object of his discourse is to establish one basic principle, ". . . that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection." By this principle, no individual or minority may be forced to do for themselves things which they would rather not, merely on the premise that they would be benefited by so doing.

This basic principle for the insurance of individual human liberty can be applied to almost every phase of human relations. Mill himself applies it in a broad sense to the problems of enforcing testimony in court, saving the life of one's fellow man, and participation in the common defense. However, Mill either neglects or ignores the fact that by his very principle he sets up a basis upon which can be built a strong case against each of these supposedly unquestioned rights of enforcement, as well as for it. One may take, as an example, the problem of compulsory conscription. To argue against this intrusion by the governmental majority upon the rights of the individual minority is to argue for the man who stands opposed to it. Today this individual who, for reasons of his own conscience, resists the powers that tell him he must fight stands out among his fellow men. He is known as the "conscientious objector," and he must accept with this label the general public attitude of mild scorn and mockery which it carries. The dictionary defines a conscientious objector as "One who, for reasons of faith or beliefs of righteousness, objects to warfare." It is indeed a hypocritical society which condemns those of its number who practice what it itself has preached. For our society has long held the faith of a man to be inviolable, and the dictates of his conscience to be the concern of him and no one else. Mill himself, in the idea which he propounds, declares the individual to be "sovereign" over himself and matters which concern him alone. The question now becomes this: Is participation in wartime defense of one's country a matter which *is* of concern to the individual alone? Taking the principles of individual and minority liberty, and the right of society to compel or suppress action only

to prevent its harm by the person being suppressed, the question can be answered thus: It is.

American society today cries, "Conform, conform!" and expects the individual to listen and obey. "Work for a living!" says public opinion, "Eat meat! Go to church! Join the army! Fight! Kill or be killed!" And the masses of humanity bow to the almighty will of Public Opinion, then take up the cry themselves. But here and there can be found a singular person who stands for the rights of man as an individual, who realizes that society has no right to force him to harm others. To *prevent* him from harming other members of society is perfectly logical and desirable, but it is sheer hypocrisy to claim that the social or governmental majority can force him to do to others what they must force him not to do to themselves. No, this problem cannot be solved by society *en masse*; it must be referred to the individual for resolution. If he chooses not to wantonly kill his fellow man, this decision lies entirely within the region of his own conscience and the expression of his own ideas, a privilege which even John S. Mill states is his. And with equal surety, Mill declares that one human being may involve other men in his acts and opinions only with their free and voluntary consent. It is a Constitutional right that all citizens shall be allowed, with the free and voluntary consent of the government, to practice their own religious beliefs as they see fit. How, then, can the citizen whose religious belief leads him to refrain from warfare be condemned? How then can the bulk of this "free" society compel one member to think as it thinks, believe as it believes? If to each man "... life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are guaranteed, there is no justice in forcing him to do that which would endanger these rights. To this argument Mill lends full support by his statement that the only worthwhile freedom is the pursuit of one's own good in one's own way.

If, then, freedom is to be preserved anywhere on earth, it must not be divorced from the individual's right to think as he pleases and to exemplify his beliefs by his actions, so long as in so doing he brings harm to no other man. The rights of a man whose heart and soul rebel at the thought of being forced to kill his fellow human beings for the sake of some political issue are no less to be respected than those of a man who wishes to print the truth in his newspaper or to go to church on Saturday or to discuss with his neighbors the failings of a public official. Such rights are to be held inviolable, for without them there can be no liberty. If it is to maintain a reputation for liberty, a government with professed democratic ideals can no more deny each particular man his rights of speech and creed than it can set up a dictator at its head. Man's choice of whether to fight or not to fight, being assuredly a question of creed, is then not to be denied him, for in the words of John Stuart Mill, "No society in which these liberties are not, on the whole, respected, is free, whatever may be its form of government; and none is completely free in which they do not exist absolute and unqualified."

ON LIMITS TO LIBERTY (II)

It is generally believed, and has been since man's earliest beginnings, that the customs and beliefs of any one race or nationality of people are, to the members of the race, matters which need no explanation or justification. Each social group, having formulated within itself certain modes of behavior, accepts them without question as being proper; and from these basic customs and ideas of right and wrong are derived the opinions of the social mass, and, eventually, the laws which govern its members. Since these laws which regulate a group of people have their basis in the customs and ideals upon which the group was founded, one would think that they would be recognized as having been devised from the common need, for the common good. But it is not always so. Although the majority of human beings will consent to comply with the rules laid down for the benefit of all, there arises occasionally an individual, an individualist, who refuses to obey. He must prove that he can wield his individual rights for his own benefit, no matter what the results may be upon the other members of his society. Such a man is the so-called "conscientious" objector.

It has been argued, since the appearance of the problem of the conscientious objector, just whether or not his motives are inspired by conscience or by fear, whether he is noble in his wish to refrain from killing his fellow man or whether he is simply afraid that his fellow man may kill him first. This controversy may never be resolved, as a man with sincere intentions would not change his beliefs, and a man with any other sort of motives would never admit them to be so. Therefore the problem is not whether or not a man has the right to believe as he pleases; neither is it whether or not man's ideals are worthwhile. It is rather a question of which has the greater worth, the stubborn will of the lone individual, or the benefit of all the individuals of which a civilization or a society is composed. Is there justification for forcing one member to act against his whim and will so that all members of the group may profit? According to the principles of John Stuart Mill, there is.

In his essay, "On Liberty," Mill states that the only justifiable reason for interference with the conduct and personal liberties of an individual is for self-protection. There is no other way to define the drafting of armies to fight directly the indirect battles of society than as self-protection. No democratic, free government would seek to provoke war purely for the sake of killing members of earth's other nations, and no civilized group of people would wantonly send the best of its manpower, in the prime of life, to be slaughtered in battle if it were not necessary for the continued survival of the group as a unified nation. It can hardly be said that the responsible members of a modern society would provide, within the constitutional law of the country, a means for the conscription of armies if it were not deemed imperative that men be ready to defend their nation and the masses of indi-

viduals that the name "nation" represents. Mill has declared that in order for injustice to be done in forcing an individual to comply with the customs and laws of society his actions must involve either himself alone, or others with their voluntary and undeceived consent. Who in society would consent to allow one individual rights which obviously cannot be granted to all? And who can say that the individual who refuses to accept his rightful share of responsibility to his compatriots does not do so for reasons which are deceitful? On this premise, then, no one can seek exemption. Also, the physical or moral good of the rebellious man is no warrant for asylum, for there is no one but who is seeking his own physical and moral benefit. It is the widely, almost universally, held belief that each man is responsible to his fellow man in those matters which concern the other's safety or well-being. Such matters as the saving of another's life where possible, the protection of the helpless from ill use, and the common defense of all are instances cited by John S. Mill in which a man is, of necessity, required to consider not only his own selfish motives, but the welfare of all concerned. His refusal to join forces with his country in time of war is, in effect, a refusal to save or protect or defend those within it. This refusal would be justified in the case of children, imbeciles, or savages, whose control or enlistment might result in worse problems than those present. The average American draftee cannot be so classified.

But one may ask, and rightly so, if the enforcement of compulsory conscription may not lead to the enforcement upon man of other restraints contrary to his desires, and eventually to a loss of valuable liberties. There is only one answer to this question. Without restraint of some sort upon society, no law, no order, no freedom could ever be realized. It has been said that if one is free to do anything, he is free to do nothing. That is to say that if every man has the right to do as he wishes without thought to others, every other man has the same right, and need give no thought to him. A society ruled by this sort of crude anarchy would not be a society at all, nor even a civilization, but a group of barbaric savages. It is therefore the right of the individuals who compose a society to require that each man give up for the common good some of his individual liberties in order that a greater liberty, that of doing and being done unto with equal deference, may be preserved.

Every Day

ANONYMOUS

Rhetoric 101, Theme 10

GRAMPS AND GERTRUDE ARE STANDING AT THE DOOR again today, just like every other day, five days a week, fifty weeks a year. They make a rather amusing couple. Gramps must be about seventy, way overdue for a pension, but still working. It is strange how his Burlington uniform seems to be as much a part of him as the shaggy white hair peeking out from under his stiff blue cap. He always walks as if he were still on the train, swinging his feet out to each side, letting his round body drop firmly over each step. Gertrude seems to be a great deal younger, but she too is showing her age. Her slightly graying hair is still piled high on her head in a mass of tiny, beauty-shop curls. Her tastes haven't seemed to change at all. She still wears those same matronly print dresses and carries the same type of long flat purse.

Every day, they're there together just before the 6:05 pulls in for the loading of hundreds of tired commuters and exhausted shoppers. Most of the passengers on the 6:05 are store clerks, finished with another day's work, but Gert completes her day at 4:00. She hasn't taken the 4:10 or 4:23 in years. Instead, she waits for Gramps every night. You don't feel comfortable speaking to them. They try hard to be unnoticed, so you pretend that you never saw them together, just as they pretend not to see you.

They separate as the train backs in. Gert walks down to the very first car and takes her seat to the right at the back of the car, while Gramps joins the other trainmen to swap a few words before the train leaves.

At precisely 6:05 he yells "All aboard," then holds the train for one or two latecomers. Every night there are the same late ones, and every night the same brief wait. He goes about his duty of punching out the little numbered squares on the commuters' monthly tickets in his same slow fashion as he calls out the stops, "Siss-ro, Dounas-goove, Liii-L," in his well-practiced conductor's slur.

Most of the commuters get off by about the third last stop, leaving a few last sleepy passengers scattered throughout the train. About this time Gramps strolls up to the first car swinging the heavy doors out of his way. Gertrude moves the large purse and worn newspaper out of the way. There they sit, every night, five nights a week, fifty weeks a year. Now and then they mumble a word or two.

When the old roundhouse appears on the right of the tracks a short distance from the end of the line, Gertrude begins to walk to the other end of the train. Gramps is close behind, struggling with the heavy car doors. They smile, remarking to the scattered regular passengers. As the train squeals to

a slow stop, Gramps releases the automatic doors. He steps down, plants his feet on the ground, and helps the last passengers off: the lady with too many packages, the tired clerk from Fields, and those two college students who are working in Chicago for the summer.

Gertrude makes her lonely way home, only glancing good-bye to Gramps. She knows he'll be there to meet her tomorrow, and the next day, and the next.

Gramps, too, knows Gertrude will be there. He walks home, each deliberate step bringing him closer to the big, old white frame house on Simms Street where he knows his wife will be waiting for him, every night, five nights a week, fifty weeks a year.

How to Get Rid of a Despised Professor

BOB SCHALL

Rhetoric 100, Theme 4

THE AVERAGE STUDENT HAS AT LEAST ONE PROFESSOR on campus whom he would very much like to get rid of. Perhaps the student was flunked on a chemistry test or given a "D" on his last theme. After many such provocations, I have devised the perfect method for the extermination of these professors.

Many students have suggested slipping sulfuric acid into a professor's drinking water or putting a rattlesnake in his briefcase. I have come to the conclusion that these methods are too slow and painful to use on the average professor. I think they should be reserved for deans or presidents.

I propose that the student, in order to waste as little time as possible, use a car to get his first professor. The student will find that this method, in addition to being the quickest for both himself and the professor, also affords a quick means of transportation back to Kam's, so that he has plenty of time to finish his homework for the next day.

The first step in my method is to choose the proper car. A car of the corvette class is recommended because of its quick pickup and its proven ability to jump curbs and hit things along the roadway. Some things to consider while choosing the car are the gas mileage and the size of the professor. In evaluating the former, just think how frustrating it would be to chase a professor the length of the quadrangle only to run out of gas at the most important instant. You also have to consider the professor's size because some of the foreign cars now on sale simply will not knock down a good-sized professor.

The second step is to become familiar with the routes the professor usually takes between classes and at the end of the day. A good knowledge of these routes can greatly reduce the amount of time spent waiting for your victim. If you don't want to go to the trouble of learning all these routes and if there happens to be a tiddly-winks tournament or a convention of advocates of chamber music in town, you can usually find quite a few professors going to or from such functions. If you spot your professor going into such a meeting, it is a simple matter to find a parking place right outside the door and just wait for him.

The final step is the most important of all. It is the proper technique for actually hitting the professor. It determines whether you hear only the common, everyday smack of pedestrian meeting metal or the soul-satisfying crunch of a professor going under for the last time. Most people say the best way to finish the job is to lean casually back in the car seat while holding the clutch to the floor. Then, just as the professor starts to cross in front of you, race the engine and pop the clutch. The screech of the tires always causes the professor to turn his head in your direction. The fear-filled face of a hated professor just before he disappears below the hood ornament is said to be a magnificent sight to behold.

The Stair

DONALD LEE FOX

Rhetoric 101, Theme 1

THE STAIR WAS A STRANGE ONE, REALLY, BUT SO COMMONPLACE was its strangeness in a world of strangeness that no one ever paused to examine it. I noted it only because we stopped one dying afternoon to wait a few minutes for another companion. We parked where a black-topped alley expanded into a mockery of a court entrapped by weary, silent buildings. Because they were in the very heart of town, their cheap brick was smeared and grimed, scratched with years of obscene clichés and tired trivialities, dimmed with an ingrained soot.

Most of the buildings had fire escapes of the standard variety, totally functional Chinese puzzles of iron on which encrustations of thick black paint and of flaking rust were locked in a struggle for possession. But one, the building in which our friend lived, was different. Because its exit combined emergency escape with normal backdoor utility, it had to be different.

A great square shaft had been scored at a midpoint of the building's back wall, tunneling from the slab of cracking concrete at ground level on up through the very body of the building to where it was rudely capped by the roof, four stories high. Doors were set in all three of the walls that defined

this space, set in rotation, and each one higher than the one before, around and around, suggesting a complex arrangement inside of floor levels at halves or thirds. The doors were all the same: crazed and blackened varnish on battered wood, with one single large pane of smutted glass in each through which curtains could be seen, identical smudges of paleness in the thin blue shadows.

The stair itself could spare only enough of its substance to form a minute landing at each of the doors—it was too cramped and convulsed in its upward progress by the stricture of the shaft, the rigid demand of its environment. It made a good beginning at the bottom, opening outward with an attempt at warmth, and then its ascending portion ran into the back wall of the stairwell and it was forced to thrust out struts and supports and crossmembers for a one-step landing and turn back the way it had come, mounting just a few feet higher for all the effort. Suddenly—open space, and it must halt again and bridge the gap somehow, brace it and use that brace in some fashion to clamber upward yet further. And now a wall—and still another space-time consuming pause due to a door that must be provided for. So in this tortured manner it climbed back and forth, up through the deepening gloom, stumblingly, haltingly, and a bit desperately as it tried to reach the top-most level before the space ran out, folded back and back upon itself in its progression like time itself that comes again and again to the same place but yet not the same place. And sitting silently in the car, I thought illogically of the soda straws I used to flatten, cross, and plait when I was a child only a very few long years ago.

I watched as a last, vague quantum of reddish sunlight came wandering into the alley for a moment and passed slowly over the bottom step, touching the protruding edge of the wooden plank that formed a crude handrail. The ancient gray paint had long since worn through, and the weathered wood caught the light in delicate whorls and lines of grain-pattern, forming images of a galaxy, suggesting eddies in an infinite continuum, or perhaps mirroring the other end of the scale—the countless dancing atoms whose eternal swirling would form now this substance of the stair and later, when the stair was gone into decay, some other thing for a time, and then another, until at last, perhaps, again a stair.

Startlingly, a quick blur of white shirt, the loud slam of a door, and our friend was bolting down the stair toward us, leaping into the car. We drove away into the awakening evening, to bright lights, brassy music, and hilarity.

A Veritable Wonderland

ROBERTA TAYLOR

Rhetoric 100, Theme 8

THERE IS AN ISLAND IN THE GULF OF MEXICO, NOT FAR from the Southern tip of Florida, where seagulls rest on their fishing trips and seashells are caught on the long beach to bleach in the sun, but where human footfalls never trod the sand, and the shells rest until another tide washes them back into the sea.

At Christmas time the island is warmed in the day by the blazing sun, and at night the tropical winds blow over the warm sand. No snow falls; no blue spruce or winter pine raises its branches above the curving beach. But the stars that shone two thousand years ago on Bethlehem shine with equal radiance on that little island, and the reality of Christmas lives there.

We first came to the island on the day before Christmas, two years ago. We motored out from the mainland—my parents and brother and I—and the boat was packed with fishing gear, swim suits, boxes of food, and sleeping bags, for we planned to camp there all night.

While the sun was still bright, we anchored off shore on the lee side, away from the gulf, and the curving banks made a half-atoll around a calm bay. Here we dived in the crystal water and speared the fish that swam and hid among the shale ledges—fat red fish with black dots on their tails and zebra-striped sheepheads, gauzy angel fish and black groupers. We lifted them into the boat, the barbed tips of the spear buried in their flesh. Mother gritted her teeth and ripped the spear free.

We enjoyed the sport of the thing but we stopped as soon as we had enough fish for supper. Then, cold and damp, we climbed back into the boat and stretched across the bow deck, baking in the sun while mother fileted our catch.

Back on the island we gathered a huge pile of driftwood high on the beach; the gray sticks and planks glowed faintly silver in the deepening light. Driftwood has a spiritual quality, for it has been washed in the ocean and bleached and dried by the sun for months—months and years. The tar and scum, which were life and therefore mortality, are dissolved away, and the wood is as pure as the eternal sand and sea.

The driftwood pile was lighted, and we sat around the blaze and stared into its depths, each of us remembering that it was Christmas Eve.

Maybe my father wondered if he had done right to take us away from home and the things that had always meant Christmas—snow and lighted trees and gay parties. And maybe my mother wondered if we minded that there were no elaborately wrapped presents.

But the fire burned down the glowing ashes, and we drew in closer. The stars were very far above and the sea beat softly around us. All that we had in eternity we had within ourselves—and that was enough. The spirit of Christmas is the spirit of giving, and the only gift that is worthy of the eve before Christmas is love—and we had that.

England and the American Civil War

RAMONA OLDENNETTEL

Rhetoric 102, Theme 11

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE AMERICAN CIVIL War—the battles, the generals, the statesmen, to mention a few topics—but not much has been written about European opinions. "Yet European opinion was one of the vital factors in the outcome of the war. Intervention by Great Britain or by France would have established the Confederacy."¹ In this paper I will attempt to show the diplomatic relationships between Great Britain and both the Federal and Confederate governments of the United States.

"To secure favor in England was of course the especial desire of each section; for as England went it was quite certain the powers in general would go."² But how did Great Britain feel toward the Federal and Confederate governments? In 1861 the Civil War was not a war over slavery; until Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, English sympathy was with the South. The Tory aristocracy, which compared socially with the Southern plantation owners, was eager for the downfall of any democracy. The North was competing with England as an industrial center, and its merchant marine had already passed England's as the greatest power. The Federal government had also passed the Morrill Tariff Act which antagonized Britain.³ Although the South was favored to win, England and Europe were sure the Union could never be restored.

It is understandable why Jefferson Davis and the Confederates were so confident of recognition as a separate country. Not only did they have British sympathy, but they also felt that the demand for cotton would be so strong that it would compel England to interfere within a few months.⁴

It was during this period that Robert Toombs, the Confederate Secretary of State, and Davis selected a Commission to Europe to plead for recognition. Heading this group was William L. Yancey, the foremost proslavery speaker in the South. The Confederates, it seems, used poor judgment in the selection of Yancey as an ambassador of good will, because at this time England had freed her slaves and to most Englishmen slavery was despised. Davis chose

Yancey, so the rumors ran, to get him out of the country; his name had been linked with the Presidency.⁵ Yancey's appointment emphasizes the Confederate's "confidence in recognition by foreign powers. They apparently believed that Europe was so dependent on the Confederacy that Southern envoys, however obnoxious their opinions might be to European sentiment, would receive a cordial reception."⁶

But Yancey's reception was not cordial. Lord John Russell, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, granted an appointment but said very little. Yancey "requested in so many words that the Queen acknowledge the Confederacy as a free and independent state and enter into a treaty of amity and trade."⁷ Russell was polite and thanked the Commissioners, but "to not the slightest extent did he commit his Government. . . . Three days afterward, Yancey and his confreres had another, briefer meeting with the Foreign Secretary. That ended their personal intercourse."⁸

On May 12, 1861, the Queen issued a proclamation of neutrality which recognized the South as a belligerent state, but this was not due to the persuasion of the Southern Commission.⁹ Yancey remained in England for ten months but did not receive the courtesy that was usually extended to an accredited diplomat. Knowing that their mission was a complete failure, the Commission sadly returned home.

It must have been a painful disappointment to the South to see the failure of their Commission. They who had felt that England could not exist without their cotton were finding that England not only could exist but was now snubbing their diplomats.

One explanation for this deliberate disregard for the Southern envoys is the astonishing diplomacy of William H. Seward, Lincoln's Secretary of State.

Even before Lincoln's inauguration, while Seward was still Senator from New York, he had evidently fixed upon the one possible way of forestalling unfriendly action by Great Britain and France. At that time neither of these nations desired war with the United States, even a United States weakened by domestic convulsion. The general political situation in Europe made such an adventure unwelcome to either power. The one way of preventing recognition, in Seward's opinion, was to play upon this apprehension. British aversion to war—here was Seward's one diplomatic card. That it required courage, even audacity, to play it, was evident, but in this threat of war lay America's best chance to defeat Southern plans for European help. . . . At dinner tables in Washington he was talking without the slightest restraint. On such occasions Seward openly proclaimed his favorite plan for solving the problems of Secession and reuniting North and South. This was nothing less than embarking on a war with Great Britain or France, or even with both. Once engaged in such a contest, Yankee and Rebel would lay aside their family row, and join forces in fighting the foreign foe. It comes as something of a surprise to

discover, from the diplomatic correspondence of the time, that this kind of talk produced uneasiness in high British circles.

When he entered the Cabinet, the ideas so unguardedly set forth in conversation became his official attitude. . . . Both Lord Lyons and Mercier [British and French Ministers in Washington] were notified, face to face, that recognition of the Confederacy would mean war with the United States.¹⁰

Charles Francis Adams, the Northern Minister, enjoyed greater success than the Southern envoys. Adams expressed dissatisfaction with the presence of the Southern Commission and with the British recognition of Southern belligerency. Russell assured him that it was not at all uncommon to receive unofficial envoys, and he added that he did not plan to see them again. This was not a promise, but Russell did not see them again.

Throughout the American war Britain exercised a policy of watchful patience. "England's practice, ever since the days of the Holy Alliance, had been one of non-intervention in the affairs of other states except when her own honor or interest was concerned."¹¹ Britain was not eager to involve herself in war, as we mentioned before, because this would mean a dispatch of a large part of her fleet across the ocean, leaving her own shores exposed to her enemies.

But late in 1861 an event occurred which almost caused war between the United States and England. Captain Charles Wilkes of the United States war vessel *San Jacinto*, hearing that the two Confederate Commissioners, Mason and Slidell, were on board the *Trent*, a British mail steamer, intercepted the neutral ship, arrested Mason and Slidell, and took them to Fort Warren in Boston. The North was overjoyed, in spite of the fact that this was the same sort of procedure the United States had protested against when practiced by England before the War of 1812.

England was angry to say the least. Public meetings were held to urge the government to consider strong measures; people on the street talked of nothing else; and the papers took up the war-like trend. The Navy was readied for action, and troops were sent to Canada. The British Foreign Office submitted an insulting dispatch to the Queen for approval. Her husband, Albert, intervened and toned down the message; consequently, instead of a war-like ultimatum, Lincoln received a friendly message asking for the release of the prisoners and an apology.¹²

During the time the dispatch was sent and the reply received, the public attitude simmered down. "The more men thought about war with America, the more distasteful the prospect became."¹³ It was with great relief that "the American reply, consenting to give up the prisoners, though without formal apology, reached England."¹⁴

There is a touch of irony in the Trent Affair. Mason and Slidell "had been sent abroad to embroil the United States in war with Great Britain and

France; and, without any effort on their part, they came within an inch of succeeding."¹⁵ This was the nearest they came to diplomatic triumphs. Mason had no more success with the British government than Yancey. Mason was received by Lord John Russell only once, and this could not be considered official as Russell received him in his home.

A few months after the Trent Affair, British thoughts turned to the blockade and cotton. At the outbreak of the war the South had shipped all of her cotton abroad so that in 1861 England had a surplus of cotton. The Northern blockade rapidly brought on a cotton famine. There was an expectation that the Lancashire area, where most of the textile mills were located, would demand the lifting of the blockade. Since the working men in the textile mills were sympathetic with the Northern feelings on slavery, they remained silent and made no demands. England soon began importing cotton from Egypt and India in order to relieve the situation. "To the dismay of the Confederacy, all was borne with patience, and one may search long in history to find anything more creditable."¹⁶

Lord John Russell, England's Foreign Minister, was a shrewd politician. It has been suggested that he favored the North because he ignored the Southern Commissioners and because his policy throughout most of the war was one of non-intervention. When the South declared the blockade was illegal, Russell recognized it as legal because he saw in this a way that England could blockade an enemy country. Russell established a new set of principles in the existing American War that he thought England might need in her future conflicts.¹⁷

Any notion that Russell's approval of the Federal blockade was an expression of friendship for the North receives a severe shock when we view his American attitude in the late summer and fall of 1862. Those months—from August to November—represented the only period when the Confederate Government made a near approach to European recognition. And the leader in this new British attitude was Lord John Russell. . . . Letters of Russell to Palmerston left no doubt about the matter.¹⁸

In December, 1862, Russell abandoned his efforts for Confederate recognition. Russell realized that his persistence in this matter could break up his Cabinet, for only three out of fifteen members favored recognition. "So far as Great Britain was concerned, the movement for recognition was dead."¹⁹

Things started looking better for the Union in 1863: Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation; the Union Army had begun winning battles; and England had passed the crisis of the cotton famine and had begun trading munitions for wheat with the North. The Union's prestige continued to climb, and from then on there was little danger of English intervention.

Thus we see the reasons for English neutrality were numerous. Not the least among these reasons was the fact that England found it very profitable

to stay out of the war. At the end of the war, England's munitions and excess linen profits were \$100,000,000 each and her woolen industry profits were \$150,000,000.²⁰

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Donaldson Jordan and Edwin J. Pratt, *Europe and the American Civil War* (New York, 1931), p. xi.
- ² James Kendall Hosmer, *The American Civil War*, (New York, 1913), I, 75.
- ³ William E. Woodward, *Years of Madness* (New York, 1951), p. 107.
- ⁴ Hosmer, p. 308.
- ⁵ Burton J. Hendrick, *Statesmen of the Lost Cause* (Boston, 1939), p. 141.
- ⁶ Hendrick, p. 142.
- ⁷ Hendrick, p. 143.
- ⁸ Hendrick, pp. 143-144.
- ⁹ Hendrick, p. 144.
- ¹⁰ Hendrick, pp. 145-146.
- ¹¹ Jordan, p. 9.
- ¹² Hendrick, p. 249.
- ¹³ Jordan, pp. 40-41.
- ¹⁴ Jordan, pp. 45-46.
- ¹⁵ Hendrick, p. 250.
- ¹⁶ Hosmer, p. 309.
- ¹⁷ Hendrick, p. 274.
- ¹⁸ Hendrick, pp. 277-278.
- ¹⁹ Hendrick, p. 282.
- ²⁰ Woodward, p. 107.

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Rhet as Writ

Theme title: The Need for a Nuclear Test Band.

Marriage among teenagers, especially girls, is fashionable.

Competative athletical teams are usually odious toward each other.

By ordering censured films, the theater would be doing the best thing possible to secure the trust and confidence of all the American public.

It was the fathermost point south that could be reached by a ship.

Birth control should not be used to control birth.

Of juvenile delinquents: It behooves us to share our sheltered lives and beds of roses with these unfortunate creatures who have crept into our population.

If they would stop for just a minuet and think of what they have said, they would think how ridiculous it is.

Many people think of politicians and corruptionists in the same breath.

The influencing of parents is an experience which every person must go through from babyhood to adultery.

The word nonconformity to some people immediately brings to mind a picture of a bearded, unwashed individual sitting in a cafe expresso reciting obscene poetry.

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